

Patterns of Russian Leadership: Graphing the Past to Predict the Future

Research Thesis

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by

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## Introduction

Putin and the modernization of Russia has been closely followed by many Western media outlets, especially the US. The sentiment amongst commentators has been the same, they are worried about the authoritarianism that Putin has been demonstrating. To some lay readers, they may spectate Vladimir Putin's actions and make assumptions about Russia based off them. Or perhaps they see Russia in a struggle and want someone to help liberate and instill democracy. Although, this is not the first time Russia is in a position like this, one where a ruler has too much power and the people do not necessarily have all the freedoms that they want.

Russia's Imperial history is filled with autocratic rulers – their Emperors and Empresses were okay in some cases with giving some freedoms, or lightening (and eventually liberating) serfdom. But many were uncomfortable with the notion of change and wanted to keep the power balance in their favor. Even after the 1917 Revolution and Lenin's work, there were still problems with how things were ruled. Under Stalin, many citizens endured economic hardships, and were sentenced to gulag camps for faulty accusations. Governmental purges were normalized, although it was all for the greater good of Soviet society.

This is when I began to think about what Russia will look like after Putin, a question that was piqued in the last year by Alexei Navalny. Navalny is a Russian lawyer who brought to light inconsistencies in government spending, which consisted of elites pocketing a lot of the money. Angered by the corruption, Navalny has spent time researching for his blog and YouTube posts to bring attention to political issues. He also tried to run for president in 2016 but was eventually banned from the ballot. He is now a well-known Kremlin critic, politician, and anti-corruption activist. With his line of work, he has arranged protests and has been arrested several times over the past 9 years; as well as surviving a poisoning event that occurred in 2020. Upon returning to

Russia earlier this year, he was arrested and is currently being detained. But his movement does not end when he is gone, many of his followers knowing how to operate without his leadership.

The situation that is inherently attached to Navalny can be traced throughout Russian history. Citizens are upset with the leadership and are willing to protest about it, get arrested for it, and listen to an opposition voice. But how were the conditions for this made possible again? Is time able to “repeat” itself in this way? These were my first questions as I wanted to analyze all the Russian leaders to observe a pattern if there were one. In this thesis I will discuss the specifications of my graph as well as analyze it. My aim in this research is to come to a conclusion about the patterns that are formed, as well as what a post Putin era may look like.

### **Chapter One: Historical Visualization and Dissecting the Tiers**

Historical visualization takes up a large portion of this research, so it is helpful to first explain where this idea came from and the thought process behind it. First almost a year, I have been wrestling with the idea of time and history having a “shape.” When discussing a specific shape, this could be a 3D representation, or really any shape that one would believe is suitable for a certain period in history. This goes beyond the way that long durée history is typically represented, which is by timelines. In my research of the relationship between time and history I wanted to originally represent a graphic that showed the demonstrated what a “shape” of history would look like. In these, I was somewhat set on proposing the shape of time being a DNA spiral. This would allude to time shadowing itself, but not necessarily repeating. Although this concept is nice in theory, it is much harder to reproduce. I wanted to be able to easily visualize patterns in history while developing something more nuanced than a standard timeline. Thus, the idea of the graph and tiers came about.

Before venturing into constructing the visualization, I had already sorted at least on “tier” of my work. I knew that Ivan IV (the Terrible), Peter I (the Great), Joseph Stalin, and Vladimir Putin would all be sorted into a Tier. This is based off their policies and ruling styles, and in the case of Putin and Stalin, their admiration for past rulers and their want to emulate them. Peter I (the Great) is one of the most recognizable names in Russian history. His reign brought upon a turning point from Medieval Russia to a modernized Western outlook. Peter enforced a Western dress (lighter garments that were not necessarily appropriate for Russian weather), as well as co-ed gatherings, and the shaving of beards.<sup>1</sup> Not only that, but Peter was interested in phasing the Boyar Duma and old Muscovite system of overlapping chancelleries.<sup>2</sup> To do this, Peter borrowed from Western models of government centralization to look over the provinces.

Because of these kinds of reforms, Peter’s reign is associated with rapid reform and modernization. Stalin has frequently alluded and derived his own power by connecting himself to Peter, as well as Ivan. He wanted to be remembered as a reformer with his industrialization policies in the Soviet Union. Coinciding this, his time in power brought an element of terror that is on the level of Ivan’s in terms of policing his own citizens and frequent purges in government and society. So far, I have drawn a metaphorical “line” between Ivan, Peter, and Stalin. In ruling style and authoritarianism, Putin could very well be a part of this historical “line” that is drawn. In a recent BBC article, Putin announced that he sees himself in line with all the “Greats” in Russian history (i.e., Ivan the Great, Peter the Great, Catherine the Great, etc.). Putin follows the footsteps of Peter to an extent; he eliminates his political opponents and uses force when needed to support his policies. But he is not necessarily seen as someone who is associated with reform.

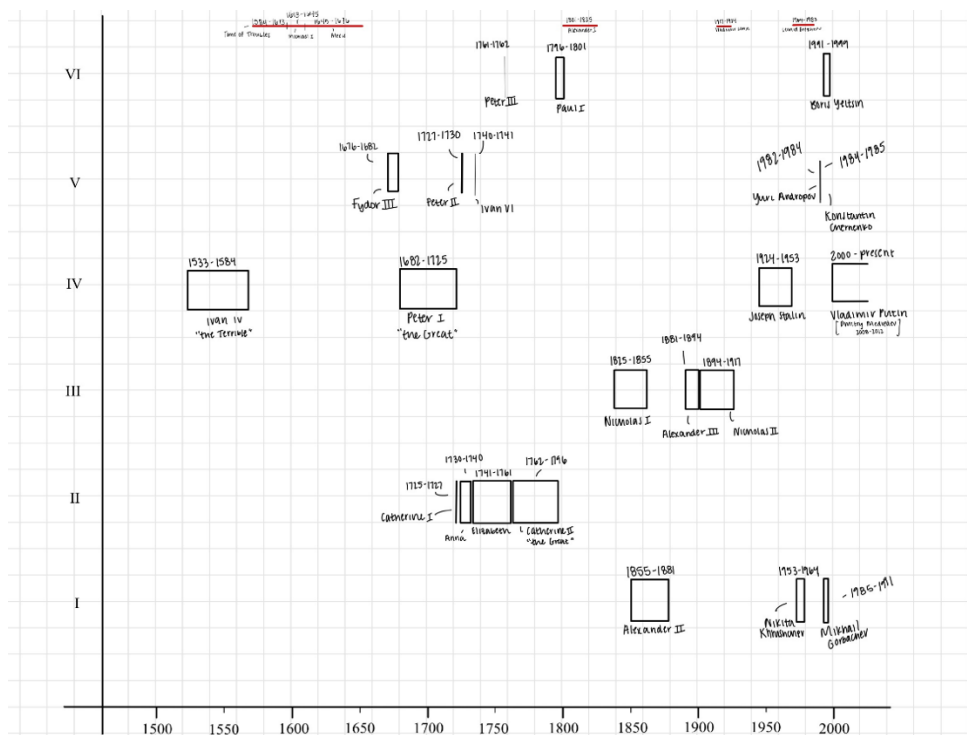
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<sup>1</sup> In Russian Orthodoxy, a beard was what made someone in the image/likeness of God, shaving it was sacrilegious.

<sup>2</sup> Catherine Evtuhov, David Goldfrank, Lindsey Hughes, and Richard Styles, *A History of Russia: Peoples, Legends, Events, Forces* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004), 217.

Yet, if Putin is a “Great” what typically comes after one of the Greats? If these rulers fall in line together, how do the other rulers fair as well?

Before further discussing the Tiers, who is in them, and why, there are a few points to consider. In terms of organization of the Tiers, there is no hierarchy in them. Meaning, Tier I is not “better” or “worse” than Tier IV Those sorted into the “No Tier” list is represented by a red line, this does not mean they are “less important” than the rest of the rulers and is for visualization purposes. I wanted to distinguish them between rulers that were sorted into Tiers. After experimenting with both, I determined that it was easier to differentiate when those not sorted into Tiers were represented in a different way. Because I will be presenting different versions of the graph, the Tiers have a general category listed to introduce how the rulers are grouped. At the beginning of each Tier will be a list of the corresponding Tier numbers for easier viewing.



The x axis represents the years, with every half of a square representing 10 years (see Appendix for larger graph) while the y axis represents the Tiers.

## Strong Leaders

Figure 1.1: Tier I, Figure 2.1: IV

As discussed before, this Tier includes Ivan IV [the Terrible] (1533-1584), Peter I [the Great] (1682-1725), Joseph Stalin (1924-1953), and Vladimir Putin (2000-present; Dmitry Medvedev as figurehead [2008-2012]). They are all put in this category for a couple of reasons. First, some looked at these rulers and wanted to embody characteristics and ruling style from them, though this is not entirely true in an all-encompassing sense. Stalin is more similar to Ivan IV<sup>3</sup> because of state terrorism and policing, and similar to Peter because he wanted to bring about a sense of reform.

Peter as a reformer differs from Tier V: Liberal Reform. Peter's reforms are examples of "turning point" change, but they are brought about by using force. The reformers are in Tier V also represent turning points in Russian history, but they are from a liberation perspective. Dmitry Medvedev is grouped into this Tier as well because he acted as figurehead for Putin since Medvedev's policies were Putin's policies. This will be further explored in a later chapter.

## Foreign Influence vs. Russo Centric Influence

Figure 1.1: Tier II, Figure 2.1 VI

Peter III (1761-1762), Paul I (1796-1801), and Boris Yeltsin (1991-1999). This tier is characterized by the ruler's policies, and subsequent public approval/rule due to those policies. Peter was raised in Prussia, and found himself drawn to Germanic culture, an interest that would be apparent in his policies as well as his hobbies. Peter was known for making his guards wear Prussian uniforms and drill as if they were such. In terms of policy, he made peace with Prussia and wanted to attack Schleswig, an old possession of his Holstein ancestors from Denmark.<sup>4</sup> This

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<sup>3</sup> Ivan IV's creation of the *oprichniki* (secret police) is used during all four of these ruler's time in power.

<sup>4</sup> Evtuhov, Goldfrank, Hughes, and Styles, *A History of Russia: Peoples, Legends, Events, Forces*, 265.

war was unpopular and concerning to Russian soldiers who heard rumors that Peter was planning on replacing the Russian soldiers with those in Holstein.<sup>5</sup> It was also said that he wanted to convert Russia to Lutheranism, a thought that would have been blasphemous to all Russians. He was eventually overthrown in a coup, and his wife Catherine II became Empress of Russia.

Paul I was similar as he took foreign influence during the short period he was in charge. Paul was the son of Catherine II and Paul III, and had grown up estranged from his mother, which made him paranoid of those around him. It seems as if Catherine II did not particularly like Paul. She had started raising Alexander I and even proposed that he succeed her and pass Paul. This led to a growing dislike of his mother, and the reversal of many of her policies. Paul enjoyed engaging in Prussian army drills, which is where he spent most of his free time. Like his father, he reiterated dreams of Frederick the Great's military successes.<sup>6</sup> He made multiple nefarious foreign policy moves (breaking an alliance with Austria, not yet allied with France<sup>7</sup>, almost at war with Britain) and had an unstable relationship with his noblemen.<sup>8</sup> This paired with his other faults led to his assassination.

Yeltsin adopted control of Russia during the Soviet Union's collapse, a transitional time, and a lot of demands to be met, economically, politically, and socially. With the fall of socialism behind him, Yeltsin's mission was to bring a new state out of an old corrupt one – a mission that would prove to be difficult. Western models of society are built on mutual trust between government and citizens. How would Yeltsin root out corruption, build a reliable civil service

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<sup>5</sup> Evtuhov, Goldfrank, Hughes, and Styles, *A History of Russia: Peoples, Legends, Events, Forces*, 265.

<sup>6</sup> Evtuhov, Goldfrank, Hughes, and Styles, *A History of Russia: Peoples, Legends, Events, Forces*, 314.

<sup>7</sup> France is culturally significant within the context of 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe, during this time Russia imported much of French culture into their society (i.e., French style and salons, French as the primary language of politicians). Disliking France and being a big fan of Prussia in its place seems counter-cultural.

<sup>8</sup> Evtuhov, Goldfrank, Hughes, and Styles, *A History of Russia: Peoples, Legends, Events, Forces*, 318.

and foster rule of law? How would he create a strong civil society? Does he want to form a representative democracy?<sup>9</sup> Yeltsin would take so much from the West, that it would in some ways, fail to adjust for Russia's unique positioning in the world. This would lead to even more of an economic struggle and power crisis that would be left up to Putin to deal with in 2000.

### Too short for Impact

Figure 1.1: Tier III, Figure 2.1: V

In this Tier, I have placed Fyodor III (1676-1682), Peter II (1727-1730), Ivan VI (1740-1741), Gregory Malenkov (1953-1955), Yuri Andropov (1982-1984), and Konstantin Chernenko (1984-1985). The criteria for Tier IV were quite simple, there are a handful of leaders that did not make any impact because they ruled for such a short period of time. Sometimes their rule was cut short because of their untimely death, or they were simply displaced from power. This Tier is different from the Foreign Influence vs. Russo centric Influence Tier because of this, they are separated from rulers who made such an impression on their subjects and were disliked because of it.

### Liberal Reform

Figure 1.1: Tier IV, Figure 2.1: Tier I

This Tier represents the reform movements that Alexander II (1855-1881), Nikita Khrushchev (1953-1964) and Mikhail Gorbachev (1985-1991), represented. All three are associated with eras of political and/or social liberation. Their reforms brought about growth in society. Alexander II ended serfdom and removed a crucial obstacle to Russia's economic growth. His reforms created a variety of new centers of power, as local and municipal institutions took over decisions that had once depended exclusively on the central government.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> George W. Breslauer, *Gorbachev and Yeltsin as leaders*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 145.

<sup>10</sup> Evtuhov, Goldfrank, Hughes, and Styles, *A History of Russia: Peoples, Legends, Events, Forces*, 406-7.



Khrushchev and Gorbachev are associated with the reforms that occurred in the immediate Post Stalin Era. Unlike in some cases, the ruling party that had committed crimes against its people and built an unsteady relationship with them was not overthrown. Because of this, Khrushchev wanted to distance and condemn the actions of Stalin and sought reform in terms of economy and society. Under the Khrushchev administration the Council of the National Economy (*sovnarkhoze*) was adopted. Smaller councils across the country would be responsible for managing economic activity, something that Khrushchev would believe expand aid in expanding economic efficiency.<sup>11</sup> This is just one example of a Khrushchev policy. In general, his policies brought about many changes in the Communist world and some liberalization inside the USSR.<sup>12</sup>

Policies that can summarize Gorbachev's time are *glasnost*, *perestroika*, and democratization that would push the Soviet Union into another reformatory stage. *Glasnost* invited a freer culture between government and citizen, an example of this would be the relaxed restrictions on censorship that were implemented.<sup>13</sup> *Perestroika* or reform embodied the measures of economic and structural reform that Gorbachev sought, as well as his attempts of democratization. Overall, Gorbachev had an ambitious vision for the reforms that he wanted to implement in the Soviet Union, though his plans would not be fully realized and would end unfavorably.

### Advocacy for Autocracy

Figure 1.1: Tier V, Figure 2.1: III

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<sup>11</sup> John Paxton, *Leaders of Russia and the Soviet Union: From the Romanov Dynasty to Vladimir Putin*, (New York: Routledge, 2004), 119.

<sup>12</sup> Paxton, *Leaders of Russia and the Soviet Union: From the Romanov Dynasty to Vladimir Putin*, 120.

<sup>13</sup> Breslauer, *Gorbachev and Yeltsin as leaders*, 59.

Nicholas I (1825-1855), Alexander III (1881-1894), and Nicholas II (1894-1917) all believed in autocracy and held a dislike for Western Liberalism. Nicholas I ruled by Official Nationality; or Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality which shaped most of his policies. He was interested in some reform and believed that serfdom really was harmful to the state. He rejected the ideas of Western democracy and would further make this statement by supporting government institutions when other countries were experiencing a revolution.

Alexander III opposed the reforms that his father, Alexander II had implemented. Described as a narrow-minded man, he believed that the reforms undermined Russia's traditional values that had guided the country's greatness thus far.<sup>14</sup> This combined with his devotion to maintaining the autocratic system of rule made his conservatism prominent.<sup>15</sup> Nicholas II had a similar commitment to autocracy and was against letting up on his power. The Revolution of 1905 caused reactionary policies to come about to appease Russian citizens. The State Duma was formed to allow for some "democratic" representation but would eventually be dissolved as the government saw it as a hinderance; and Nicholas II saw it only as a consulting body (like the boyar дума).<sup>16</sup>

### Women in Power

Figure 1.1: VI, Figure 2.1 II

This Tier does not necessarily represent the policies of these women, but the fact that they could be in power in a time where being a woman in political space was difficult. Sophia (1682-1689), Catherine I (1725-1727), Anna (1730-1740), Elizabeth (1741-1761), and Catherine II [The Great] (1762-1796) were all women who were given the honor to be able to rule in

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<sup>14</sup> Abraham Ascher, *Russia: A Short History*, (London: Oneworld Publications, 2017), 137.

<sup>15</sup> Ascher, *Russia: A Short History*, 137.

<sup>16</sup> Evtuhov, Goldfrank, Hughes, and Styles, *A History of Russia: Peoples, Legends, Events, Forces*, 542.

imperial Russia. I believe the reasoning behind why they were given legitimacy is quite interesting. For some, these women had married into the Romanov family (Anna and Catherine II) and were foreigners to Russia, yet they were able to embody Russian power and values. Enough so, that they were entrusted to rule the throne.

It is also important to recognize that all these dates are quite close to one another, and there has not been another woman in power since Catherine the Great. This also says something about Russia politically, that many of them are okay with having a woman as a leader. If there were any grievances (especially with those who were not Russian and had married into the family) there would have been a coup of some sort. I have debated between putting Catherine II in this Tier or in the reform Tier since she is known as a Great and introduced many reforms to Russian society. Though, even if I did place her in a reform Tier, the general historical pattern would not change greatly (Figure 3.1 compared to Figure 2.1).

Furthermore, I believe this pattern is important to recognize because not many other countries have this historical pattern during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. But it is important to note that this occurred during the 18<sup>th</sup> century and rulers were based off of line of succession.<sup>17</sup> There are no modern representations of female power, which say something about Russians' attitudes today.

### No Tiers

The Time of Troubles (1584-1613) is a period of Russian history where a succession crisis took place. False-Dimitris<sup>18</sup> came to claim the throne during this time. With much

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<sup>17</sup> After Catherine the Great there are no female rulers during the Romanov Dynasty. This is because of her son, Paul I, who changed the succession law to only go through males.

<sup>18</sup> The succession crisis ended with the last member of the Rurikid Dynasty dying. There were rumors a family member (Dmitri) was still alive but in hiding, leading to false Dmitri's to claim the throne to take advantage of the power vacuum that had occurred.

uncertainty and very little policy, I saw no reason to consider this for a Tier or to compare it with other periods in Russian history. Michael I (1613-1645) and Alexis (1645-1676) were the first two Tsars of the Romanov Dynasty. Michael I was voted unanimously to be Tsar after the Time of Troubles. The first two Romanov's have been described as not particularly "inspired" leaders, but the country regained stability after the exhaustion from an unstable era.<sup>19</sup>

Alexander I (1801-1825) was educated in the court of Catherine the Great, as we he was very favored by his grandmother. Alexander held more liberal views and help make life more livable for the peasantry. He was deeply attached to the values of the military, discipline, and regimentation.<sup>20</sup> Though, this would change in 1812 when he became influenced by religious mysticism, joining the Holy Alliance, and authoritarianism would outweigh his liberalism.<sup>21</sup>

Vladimir Lenin (1917-1924) is one of the most recognizable figures in Russian history. Lenin is a revolutionary and sought reform, but not in the same way one could talk about Gorbachev or Peter. Lenin's revolution meant getting rid of the autocratic system to replace it with a new socialist form of government. This differs greatly from the reforms made in the past, that would only improve on the existing system, not completely change it.

Not many reforms happened during Leonid Brezhnev's (1964-1982) time, because he believed that the Soviet Union had become a fully developed socialist society. Developed socialism is described by Brezhnev as: the state of maturity of the new society at which the restructuring of the entire system of social relations on the collectivist principles intrinsic to socialism is being completed. Hence, the full scope for the operation of laws of socialism, for

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<sup>19</sup> Ascher, *Russia: A Short History*, 54.

<sup>20</sup> Ascher, *Russia: A Short History*, 88.

<sup>21</sup> Ascher, *Russia: A Short History*, 88.

bringing to the fore its advantages in all spheres of life of society.<sup>22</sup> Since this was already completed to Brezhnev, he made sure that there were opportunities for Soviet citizens to engage with the benefits that socialism had to offer. During his time in power, there were some notable changes that happened. At one point, the economy had flourished under Brezhnev, and he wanted to stabilize peace relations in the West. But with little innovation over time, the economy stagnated, and the Soviet Union was stuck in economic turmoil once again.

#### Omitted from Graph

Ivan V who co-ruled with Peter I (the Great) is usually omitted from consideration when it comes into ruling. Ivan and Peter were both children when crowned co-Tsar's, and Ivan V was a very sickly child. Likewise, I did not provide a block for the Sophia regency during Ivan and Peter's childhood. The "Women in Power" Tier was made in mind of women who were able to become Empresses' in their own right. Sophia does not fall into this category because she was made to oversee until the two Tsars were of age.

Georgy Malenkov (1953-1955) is omitted because of the amount of debate around succession. He took over as Premier after Stalin's death, but some historical sources skip over him in succession and go straight to Khrushchev. Including him would also push Khrushchev ruling from 1955-1964. Although this is only by two years, the number of resources that list Khrushchev as 1953-1964 outweighs discussion of Malenkov. To keep in line with other academic resources as closely as possible this decision was made.

Dmitry Medvedev is not completely omitted from the graph, but he is not given his own spot. Since he acted as Putin's figurehead, and many see Medvedev's time in power as Putin's I

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<sup>22</sup> Leonid I. Brezhnev, *Leonid I. Brezhnev: His Life and Work*, (New York: Sphinx Press, 1982), 80.

decided to combine the two. Since many citizens knew that voting for Medvedev would essentially be voting for Putin.

## **Chapter Two: Analysis**

When I first began testing and organizing Tiers, I wanted to present Figure 1.2 as the basis of my research. But I found that the pattern of this Tier was too misleading to put at the forefront. In Figure 1.1, there are clusters around Tiers II & III and Tiers IV, V, and VI. This automatically draws one attention to these parts of Russian history, and perhaps suggests that I want the viewer to pay particular attention to these parts. Because there is no hierarchy within the Tiers, I decided to switch around the Tiers to observe different patterns that they may form. Overall, two things emerged, “clustering” of Tiers in one or two sections (Figure 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, and 1.4), or the overall look of the graph was spread out, something I would call “feathered out” (Figure 2.1 and 2.2) in relation to where they fall on the graph. The graphs that fall into the “feathered out” category is more neutral in terms of viewing. They do not force the reader to look in a specific area of the graph but force the viewer to consider each Tier and look at it as a whole. It is also worth mentioning to note that it was easier to create more cluster graphs than it was the ones with the feathered-out patterns.

Although the graph produced different shapes, I view this result as different ways on telling the story of Russian history. If I wanted to present Figure 1.1 and talk analyze the roles and policies as Empresses in 18<sup>th</sup> century Russia, the clustered pattern would have more impact on what I am trying to express. Likewise, if I had made the “No Tiers” section at the bottom, the viewer would notice that there is a long period of time where there were no rulers who have common trends. My conclusions about the “clusters” vs. the “feathered out” versions of the graphs are not as inspired as I would have originally thought. Presenting one graph over another

seems like a stylistic choice and a choice made on what the author wants the viewer to pay attention to.

But, by selecting Figure 2.1 as the centerpiece I am still suggesting something. As stated previously, there is no hierarchy within the Tiers, I would like the roles of Tier III to be easily accessible. My research's end goal is still to make a conclusion about what could happen in a post-Putin era. Though, to do this, one must further analyze the graph and the general trends that are produced throughout Russian history.

One noticeable trend is the role that women rulers have. They usually come about after times of short-lived male rulers that were disliked or suffered an early death. It is prominent that these women, some who were foreign to Russia, were able to lead the country and derive legitimacy. This notion itself reflects the kind of relationship that Russian citizens have with its ruler. A strong ruler is a strong ruler, and if that strong ruler happens to be female, then they do not have a problem. The majority will not contest a ruler solely based on them being female.

The other trend reflects the back and forth between reform and counter reform. From 1801-1991 we see rulers going back and forth between being reformists to advocating for conservatism. This has to do with the modernization that the West was undergoing. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and throughout Russian history, much of its population was made up of serfs. The abolition of serfdom gave way to alleviating some of the demands of the people, but not enough. Citizens were demanding more freedoms, higher pay, and representation by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. And Nicholas II was simply not able to meet these demands, his reign ending with him being overthrown.

Both patterns lead into the larger theme that is brought up throughout Russian history and is seen throughout the graph. Which is, likeability is important. One could make the argument that yes, likeability is important in any country when discussing their leader, but each has its own context. In Western forms of democracy, people have the power to vote, and if they dislike a public representative, they must wait 2, 4, 6, or 8 years depending on the length of the official's term. It is only then when they can vote the person out if they dislike them. In Russia's case, replacing a ruler was brought on by 1. Uprising or displacement organized by someone who dislikes them and wants to take their position.<sup>23</sup> 2. An uprising organized by citizens who are unhappy<sup>24</sup>, and (one that does not happen often) 3. Assassination by someone/organization who dislikes them.<sup>25</sup> Rulers were decided either based on a line of succession or were voted for by other officials. Neither of these modes included elective representatives or considered citizens' votes until the 1990s.

### Graph Conclusions

When looking at the graph, predicting what would happen after Vladimir Putin seems almost simple, especially when corresponding with rulers who are in the same Tier. After a very strong ruler, comes a period of rulers who are weak. But there is no context in the graph when looking at the trends of what kind of event led to a certain person being in power, even if it was succession based. The graph is meant to be read in the context of certain situations, and therefore cannot be the only thing I analyze when thinking about a post-Putin era. Therefore, from here I

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<sup>23</sup> Catherine II was a part of the coup to overthrow her husband Peter III and subsequently take his place.

Khrushchev calculated Malenkov's downfall and was voted in as Premier over Malenkov shortly after.

<sup>24</sup> Uprisings like the Decembrist Movement (1825) were by educated noblemen, while the 1905 Revolution were by the peasantry and the working class.

<sup>25</sup> Paul I was assassinated by a group of guards who were afraid of his instability as leader. Likewise, Alexander II was assassinated by a Russian revolutionary.



will move onto the context of the rise of President Putin, modern Russia, and contemporary conflicts that have arose in recent years.

Is my graph a timeline? Is it more nuanced than a timeline? Does it add more context? Yes and no. I believe it gives more information than a traditional linear timeline and added layers of information with the Tiers. But it lacks additional context that surround individual rulers, although trying to produce something like this with even more context would need be examined in a smaller period of time. It would be unrealistic of me to produce something with context for every situation that covers a little more than 500 years of history. Therefore, the production of this graphs motive is to cover large scale trends, and when need be, examine a certain period while keeping in mind the context.

### **Chapter Three: Changes in Government**

#### **An Inherited Institution: The Foundations by Yeltsin**

Putin was elected as President in yet another tumultuous time. Contemporary Russia is emerging from two decades of transition in which it has undergone three transformations – from a planned to a market economy, from the Soviet system to democracy, and from the USSR to the Russian Federation.<sup>26</sup> The modernization process has been historically difficult for Russian leaders, where they are always faced with dramatic choices. Either preserve stability at the risk of bringing society to stagnation or degradation, or make a break with the past, never being certain whether the people will support such a break and not knowing how it will turn out.<sup>27</sup> But,

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<sup>26</sup> Piotr Dutkiewicz and Dmitri Trenin, *Russia: The Challenges of Transformation*, (New York: NYU Press, 2011), 198.

<sup>27</sup> Lilia Shevtsova, “From Yeltsin to Putin: The Evolution of Presidential Power,” in *Gorbachev, Yeltsin, and Putin: Political leadership in Russia’s Transition*, ed. Archie Brown (District of Columbia: Brookings Institution Press, 2013), 67.

the regime that Yeltsin made and was eventually taken over by Putin had not completely transitioned to democracy. The system that Yeltsin created was contradicting itself, it had a democratic-populist beginning that came into conflict with authoritarian-monarchist one.<sup>28</sup> This contradiction led to the illusion, or the opportunity, that an authoritarian-democratic direction could be supported.<sup>29</sup>

The conflict that was created turned into a source of internal stability, preventing authorities from rallying around one system value over another. Moreover, the combination of democracy and personalistic rule with elements of tsarist tradition could not help but lead to the discrediting of democracy and the conversion of it into a façade that hid an entirely different substance inside.<sup>30</sup> At the core of Yeltsin's regime was a leader who put himself above the political scene and concentrated all the main levers of power in his hands, while serving as the protector of society's stability.<sup>31</sup> The origins of this conflict may also be credited to Yeltsin's want to keep Russia's place as an international super power was important to society, and encouraged the preservation of tradition, making the transition to a new way of political thinking more difficult.<sup>32</sup>

By the end of Yeltsin's rule, Russia was suffering from economic stagnation and the effects from the war that Yeltsin had started in Chechnya. Unfortunately, the regime that Yeltsin had built was average at supporting stagnation, but unreliable at maintaining times of crisis.

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<sup>28</sup> Shevtsova, "From Yeltsin to Putin: The Evolution of Presidential Power," in *Gorbachev Yeltsin, and Putin: Political leadership in Russia's Transition*, ed. Brown, 78.

<sup>29</sup> Shevtsova, "From Yeltsin to Putin: The Evolution of Presidential Power," in *Gorbachev Yeltsin, and Putin: Political leadership in Russia's Transition*, ed. Brown, 78.

<sup>30</sup> Shevtsova, "From Yeltsin to Putin: The Evolution of Presidential Power," in *Gorbachev Yeltsin, and Putin: Political leadership in Russia's Transition*, ed. Brown, 78-9.

<sup>31</sup> Shevtsova, "From Yeltsin to Putin: The Evolution of Presidential Power," in *Gorbachev Yeltsin, and Putin: Political leadership in Russia's Transition*, ed. Brown, 79.

<sup>32</sup> Shevtsova, "From Yeltsin to Putin: The Evolution of Presidential Power," in *Gorbachev Yeltsin, and Putin: Political leadership in Russia's Transition*, ed. Brown, 73-4.

Yeltsin's failures outweighed his promises that he made in 1991, resulting in a significant portion of the population had lost faith in him and democracy.<sup>33</sup> The consequences of Yeltsin's era have affected the economic and political spheres of Russian life. Yeltsin's regime was able to modernize, officials became accustomed to solving international problems in a relatively modern way. The political elite were trained in an atmosphere of pluralism and freedom of opinion.<sup>34</sup> But at the same time, under Yeltsin's government, corruption, shadowy relations, and the merger of political power and business became systematic.<sup>35</sup> Yeltsin's positives were not as noticeable as his shortcomings, leaving behind consequences in almost every facet of Russian life. In 1999 Yeltsin resigned, allotting these issues to Putin.

### Putin's Power

Vladimir Putin's ascension coincided a sharp increase in a large part of society of feelings of insecurity, personal defenselessness, and fear – a direct consequence of two events: the invasion of Chechen extremists in Dagestan, which led to large-scale military actions, and the explosions in apartment buildings in Moscow, resulting in the death of about 300 civilians.<sup>36</sup> These events, along with the rest of the issues that Yeltsin had left behind gave rise to mass support in Russian society for a strong leader and order.<sup>37</sup> Putin would prove a worthy contender for the Russian people with his “antiterrorist operation” against the Chechen extremists. This

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<sup>33</sup> Shevtsova, “From Yeltsin to Putin: The Evolution of Presidential Power,” in *Gorbachev Yeltsin, and Putin: Political leadership in Russia's Transition*, ed. Brown, 89-90.

<sup>34</sup> Shevtsova, “From Yeltsin to Putin: The Evolution of Presidential Power,” in *Gorbachev Yeltsin, and Putin: Political leadership in Russia's Transition*, ed. Brown, 88.

<sup>35</sup> Shevtsova, “From Yeltsin to Putin: The Evolution of Presidential Power,” in *Gorbachev Yeltsin, and Putin: Political leadership in Russia's Transition*, ed. Brown, 88.

<sup>36</sup> Shevtsova, “From Yeltsin to Putin: The Evolution of Presidential Power,” in *Gorbachev Yeltsin, and Putin: Political leadership in Russia's Transition*, ed. Brown, 91.

<sup>37</sup> Shevtsova, “From Yeltsin to Putin: The Evolution of Presidential Power,” in *Gorbachev Yeltsin, and Putin: Political leadership in Russia's Transition*, ed. Brown, 91.

allowed him to demonstrate that he could respond firmly in times of growing fear.<sup>38</sup>

Additionally, the Chechen war and the search for a common enemy to rally society and consolidate the regime made them dependent on security structures, as well as return them to a time of Soviet thinking, even if it were only for a moment.<sup>39</sup> The appearance of the demand for a regime with an authoritarian leader shows the unstable mood of society, rootless democratic views, and the susceptibility of the population to the manipulation by authorities.<sup>40</sup> Putin was able to further derive his power from the population because they saw him ironically as both the chosen successor of the outgoing president and an alternative or even antithesis to him.<sup>41</sup>

Although Putin offered himself as more dynamic leader than Yeltsin, to many Russian's it was more important that this alternative was propose officially by authorities and was not a part of nonsystemic plan of opposition.<sup>42</sup> The need for approval of the existing order shows that Russian society as a whole was still not used to thinking in the ways of opposition politics and was not ready to acknowledge the right of the opposition to exercise power.<sup>43</sup> All of these were conditions for Putin to derive and solidify power, which was commended by the people during his early years. Subsequently, his ruling style would dismantle Yeltsin's, Putin would conduct

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<sup>38</sup> Shevtsova, "From Yeltsin to Putin: The Evolution of Presidential Power," in *Gorbachev Yeltsin, and Putin: Political leadership in Russia's Transition*, ed. Brown, 91.

<sup>39</sup> Shevtsova, "From Yeltsin to Putin: The Evolution of Presidential Power," in *Gorbachev Yeltsin, and Putin: Political leadership in Russia's Transition*, ed. Brown, 91.

<sup>40</sup> Shevtsova, "From Yeltsin to Putin: The Evolution of Presidential Power," in *Gorbachev Yeltsin, and Putin: Political leadership in Russia's Transition*, ed. Brown, 91.

<sup>41</sup> Shevtsova, "From Yeltsin to Putin: The Evolution of Presidential Power," in *Gorbachev Yeltsin, and Putin: Political leadership in Russia's Transition*, ed. Brown, 91.

<sup>42</sup> Shevtsova, "From Yeltsin to Putin: The Evolution of Presidential Power," in *Gorbachev Yeltsin, and Putin: Political leadership in Russia's Transition*, ed. Brown, 91.

<sup>43</sup> Shevtsova, "From Yeltsin to Putin: The Evolution of Presidential Power," in *Gorbachev Yeltsin, and Putin: Political leadership in Russia's Transition*, ed. Brown, 91.

under a more rigid leadership. Where Yeltsin expressed mutual connivance within the regime, Putin began to introduce the principles of discipline and subordination.<sup>44</sup>

This is where Putin would begin to reflect opposite values within his regime. If Yeltsin was forced to rely on favorites and oligarchs, Putin would make it clear that he wanted to make a clean break with old interest groups.<sup>45</sup> Putin changed the very basis of his support by breaking with the oligarchs, relying on the bureaucracy and security structures as his foundation. Putin wanted to centralize power where Yeltsin had tried to disperse it, limited independence while Yeltsin had granted political freedoms.<sup>46</sup> Putin would turn out to be a more authoritarian leader in every aspect, but there would be some objection to the changes made.

Although the people supported the idea of having a strong leader, many were unwilling to give up freedoms that had become commonplace under Yeltsin. During a poll taken at the end of 2000, 53% of respondents thought an independent media was a necessary part of society, while 27% did not.<sup>47</sup> Only 36% of respondents were prepared to limit their freedoms and democracy for the sake of strengthening Russia's state power, while 52% were categorically against such limits.<sup>48</sup> But, political appeasement is still doable, even if citizens are unhappy with policies that leader's role out. Putin was able to mobilize the economy as well as implemented judicial, pension, housing, and utility reforms.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>Shevtsova, "From Yeltsin to Putin: The Evolution of Presidential Power," in *Gorbachev Yeltsin, and Putin: Political leadership in Russia's Transition*, ed. Brown, 95.

<sup>45</sup> Shevtsova, "From Yeltsin to Putin: The Evolution of Presidential Power," in *Gorbachev Yeltsin, and Putin: Political leadership in Russia's Transition*, ed. Brown, 95.

<sup>46</sup>Shevtsova, "From Yeltsin to Putin: The Evolution of Presidential Power," in *Gorbachev Yeltsin, and Putin: Political leadership in Russia's Transition*, ed. Brown, 95.

<sup>47</sup> Shevtsova, "From Yeltsin to Putin: The Evolution of Presidential Power," in *Gorbachev Yeltsin, and Putin: Political leadership in Russia's Transition*, ed. Brown, 101.

<sup>48</sup> Shevtsova, "From Yeltsin to Putin: The Evolution of Presidential Power," in *Gorbachev Yeltsin, and Putin: Political leadership in Russia's Transition*, ed. Brown, 101.

<sup>49</sup> Shevtsova, "From Yeltsin to Putin: The Evolution of Presidential Power," in *Gorbachev Yeltsin, and Putin: Political leadership in Russia's Transition*, ed. Brown, 104.

Though the main point is that Putin's real regime foundations rely on semi-authoritarian steps and political bargaining. He will continue to increase control over all institutions, influence the formation of parties friendly to the Kremlin, strengthen the control over the news media, and create his own loyal oligarchs.<sup>50</sup> The more control that Putin exerts, the harder it becomes for oppositional forces to arise. If democracy exists at all under Putin, it is only a limited version. In 2005, new legislation stipulated that elections be conducted exclusively according to party lists, making it impossible to elect independent candidates, to create electoral blocs at every level of elections, and for small parties to unite under parliament through joint efforts.<sup>51</sup> More measures were made to limit voting rights, and electioneering through media by certain candidates and parties against other candidates were prohibited.<sup>52</sup>

Although these are quite extreme measures, 2008 arrived and another candidate would have to be elected to main the constitutional provision that one person cannot serve more than two consecutive terms of presidency.<sup>53</sup> Dmitry Medvedev was elected, but it was only for show. It was known that Putin had arranged for Medvedev's success in the election and intended on playing a dominant role in government politics. After Medvedev's inauguration, Putin assumed the role of Prime Minister and made clear intentions to resume his powers that he retained for the past eight years.<sup>54</sup> During the façade that was the Medvedev era, a vote was passed in parliament to extend future presidential terms from four years to six years. Thus, if you equate the four years

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<sup>50</sup> Shevtsova, "From Yeltsin to Putin: The Evolution of Presidential Power," in *Gorbachev Yeltsin, and Putin: Political leadership in Russia's Transition*, ed. Brown, 102.

<sup>51</sup> Andrei A. Kovalev, *Russia's Dead End: An Insider's Testimony from Gorbachev to Putin*, trans. Steven I. Levine (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), 220.

<sup>52</sup> Kovalev, *Russia's Dead End: An Insider's Testimony from Gorbachev to Putin*, trans. Levine, 221.

<sup>53</sup> Ascher, *Russia: A Short History*, 280.

<sup>54</sup> Ascher, *Russia: A Short History*, 281.

Medvedev was in power to Putin, then by 2024 Putin will have been in power for 24 years, equaling Stalin's period of rule.<sup>55</sup>

### **Conclusion: Next Steps**

The use of my historical visualization exercises analyzing a problem to come up with a real-world prediction. Using the graph and the knowledge of Russia today, I have come up with three possible scenarios that may give us some insight on a post Putin leader.

#### **Scenario One: Limited Reform**

After periods of authoritarianism (Putin) or totalitarianism (Stalin)<sup>56</sup> liberating reform is usually a next step for people throughout all levels of society. This can be seen on the graph after Stalin died in 1953 and the rise to Nikita Khrushchev, who sought to distance the party and the country from Stalin. Although Putin is not on the same level of totalitarian power as Stalin was, he is still controlling of state media, eliminates political opponents and critics, and manipulates political elections. The next ruler could be a Tier I: Liberal Reform ruler who wants to reverse the suppressive policies of the Putin era. Some possible reforms are: allowing other independent media sources to exist in Russia, rooting out corrupt organizations and officials within the government, encouragement of free political discourse within society and the government, etc. But they will face some problems with rooting out corruption. Putin's circle controls (and profits from) the Russian economy, getting rid of them could result in economic complications. Which of course could lead to economic complications. Not to mention, the government is made of those who are politically allied with Putin and support him. Getting rid of them would

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<sup>55</sup> Ascher, *Russia: A Short History*, 282.

<sup>56</sup> Authoritarianism is not as controlling as totalitarianism is. Totalitarian regimes usually have one party (i.e., Communist Party of the USSR) and want to control citizens lives public and private lives through media and political involvement.

temporarily weaken and disrupt government institutions. Even if the intentions of the next ruler are good, they are still faced with determining how much reform can be accomplished without dire consequences.

### Scenario Two: Political Crisis and No Change

A different scenario could come about that results in a political crisis, much like one that happened after Ivan IV died. If Putin dies with remaining time left in his term, it is possible that officials may fight amongst themselves to be his stand in. Going through another election needs too much time for campaigning. Electing a temporary president to replace Putin is more likely than leaving the position open for a long period of time. The Federation Council decides Person A is suitable to for the role and votes them in. But Person B thinks they are more suitable and should be president instead. Person B plans to overthrow Person A by politically overthrowing them through a faulty accusation or wants to “get rid of them” all together. Either or, Person B comes out victorious and is now the president. Yet this creates some issues. Since it was easy to overthrow someone, Person B could also be overthrown, and a cycle of rulers in a short period of time could occur. Much like the Time of Troubles (No Tier), there will be many people vying for power and listing reasons as to why they are more qualified than someone else. In terms of society and policy, not much will happen because there is not enough time for a ruler to accomplish anything.

### Scenario Three: Revolution

In this scenario, a power vacuum occurs but this time there is enough government opposition, making a revolution possible. This leader will have many challenges to face in every way possible. The foundation of Putin’s government is corrupt. Rooting out corruption will call



for a rebuilding of government institutions, as well as finding people who can fill those positions. Getting rid of Putin's oligarchy will also disrupt the economy. The new leader will have to provide economic reforms to defer the effects of stagnation. They will also have to think of ways to prevent corruption and balance the power throughout the government. Societal reforms will occur like independent news outlets and the fear of not speaking freely about politics will vanish. Even with these newfound freedoms, citizens may worry about the economy and the future of the state may be worrisome if results are not achieved as planned.

Scenarios One and Two are based off of the historical pattern that Tier IV has followed. Scenario One mirrors Tier IV → Tier I (Stalin to Khrushchev) and Scenario Two mirrors Tier IV → No Tier (Ivan IV to the Time of Troubles). Scenario Three is based off of Alexei Navalny and the government opposition he is acquiring, though this does not mean that Navalny will be in charge of the revolution. His position in this is relevant because of the movement that he has started within society. It is also likely that Putin's successor does not fit into any of these scenarios, but I still suggest these three as the most probable. For now, we will have to wait to see where the future of Russian leadership is going and if it takes us anywhere new.

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## Appendix

All figures in the Appendix were created by SarahKate Palmer.

Figure 1.1

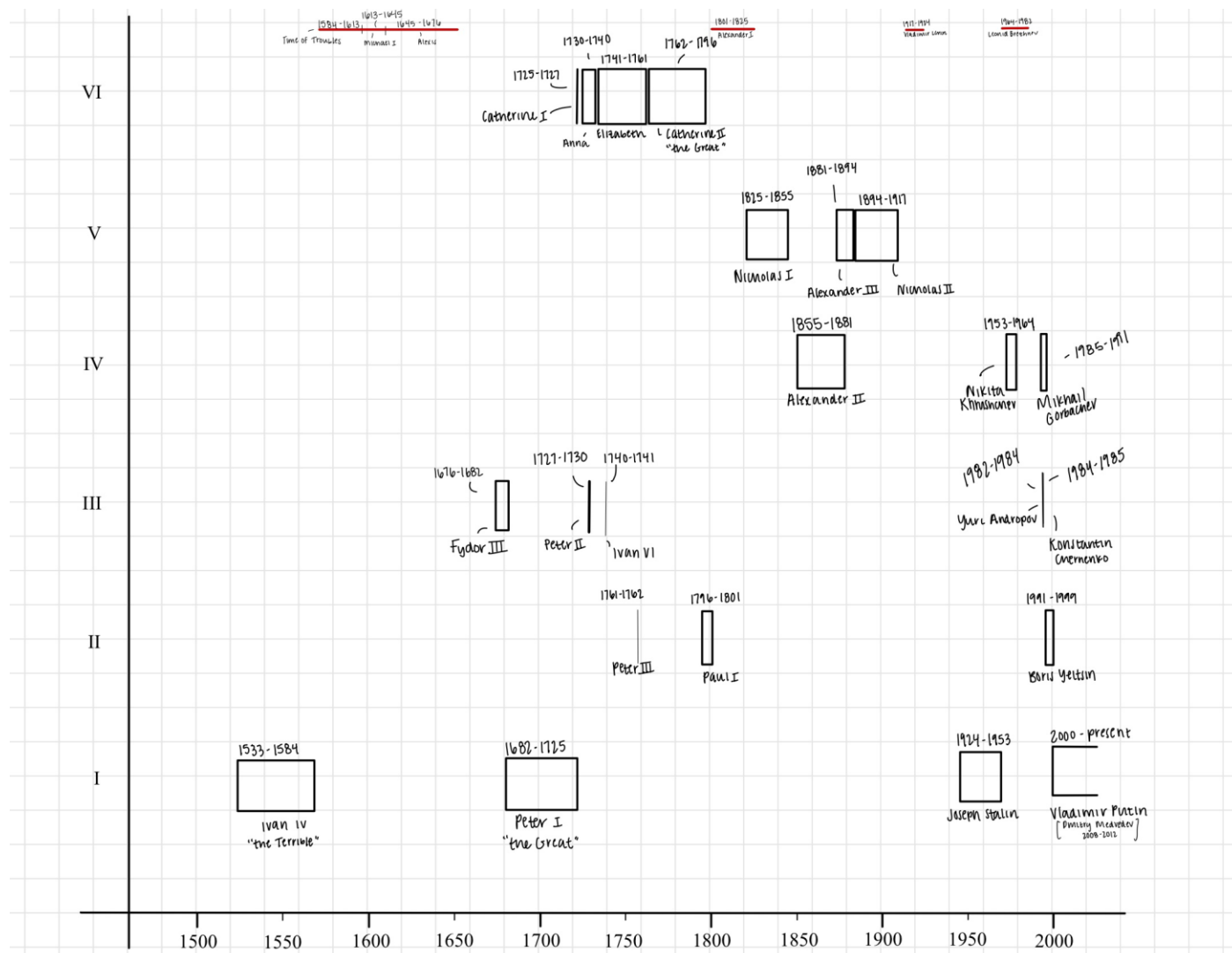


Figure 1.2

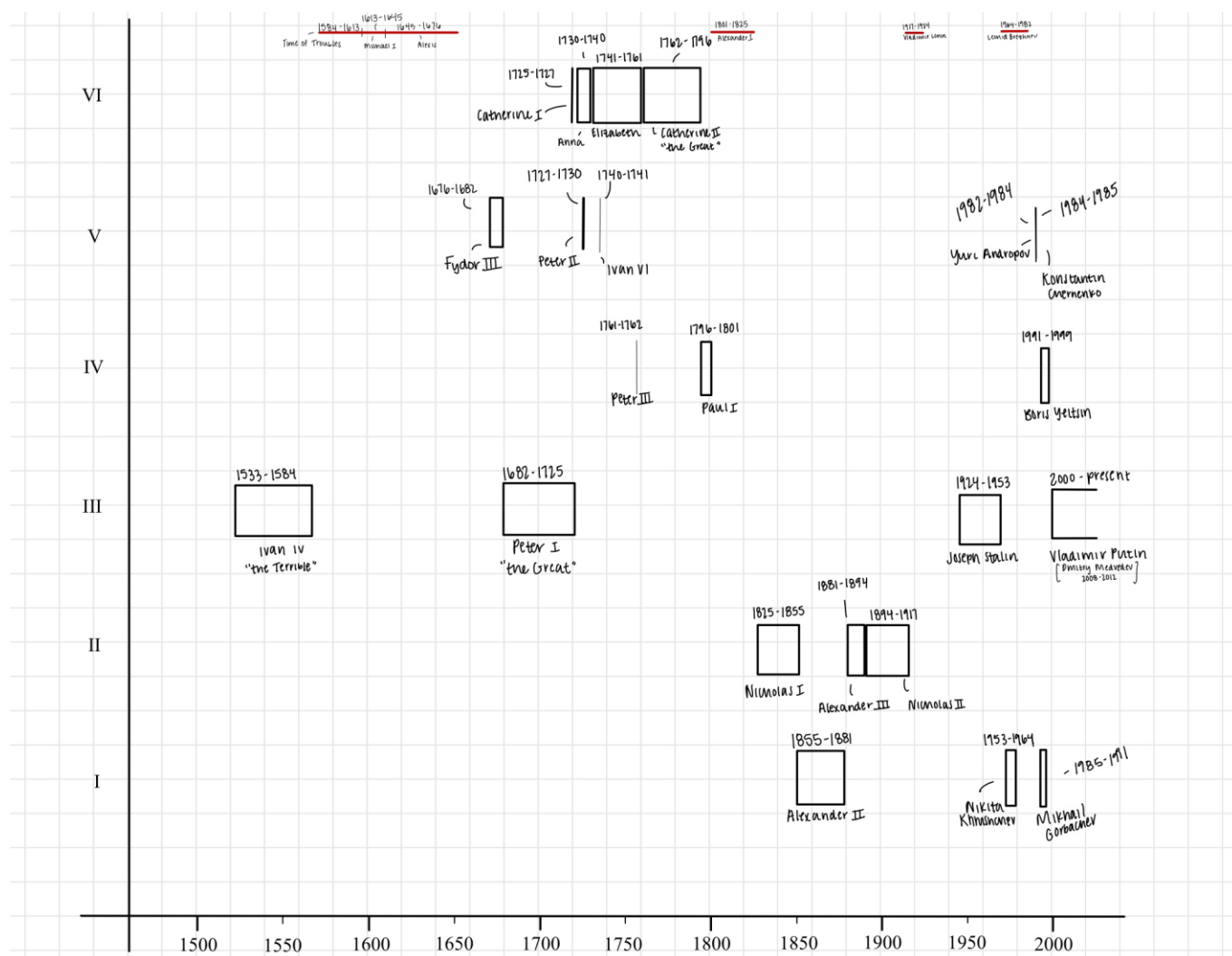


Figure 1.3

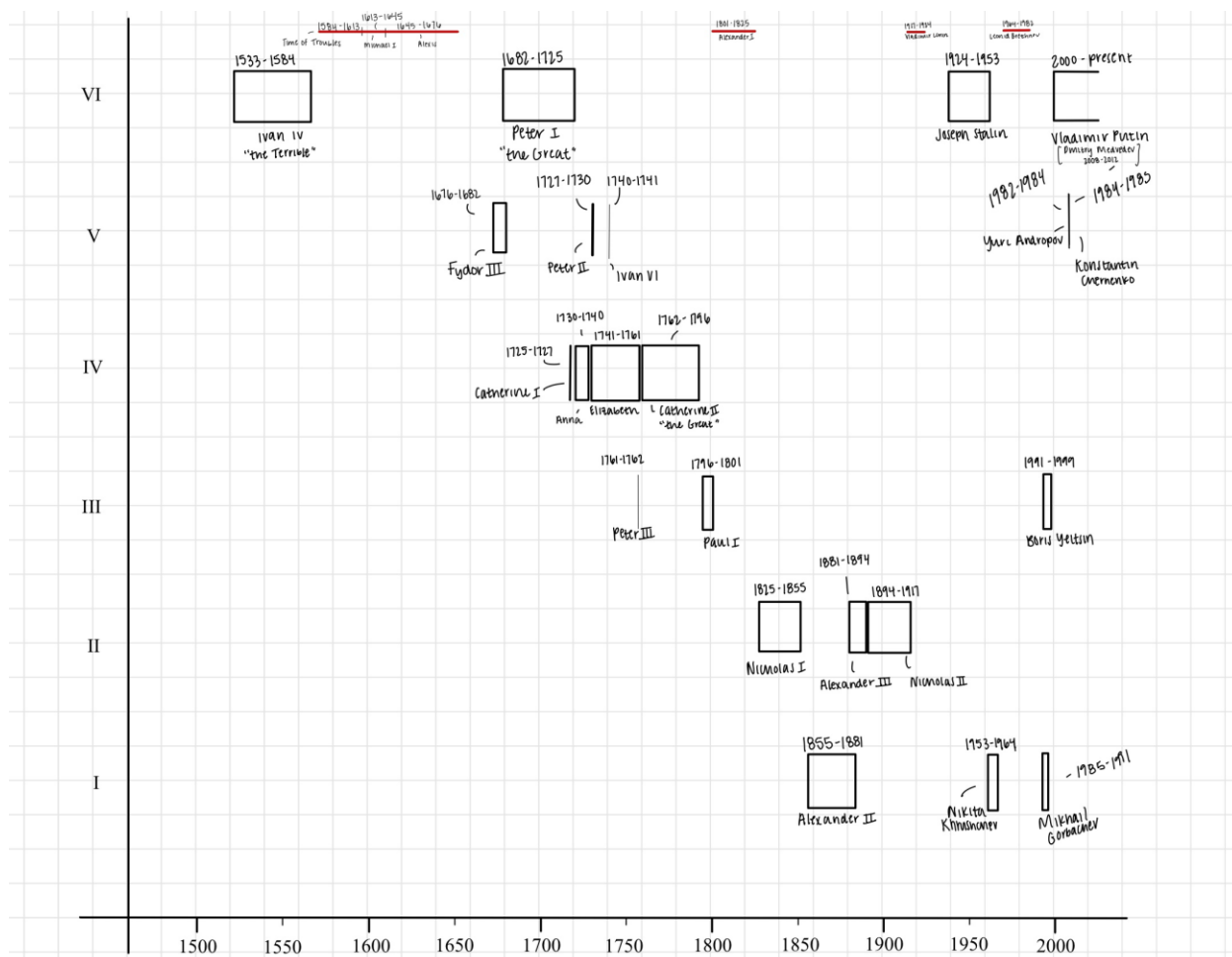


Figure 1.4

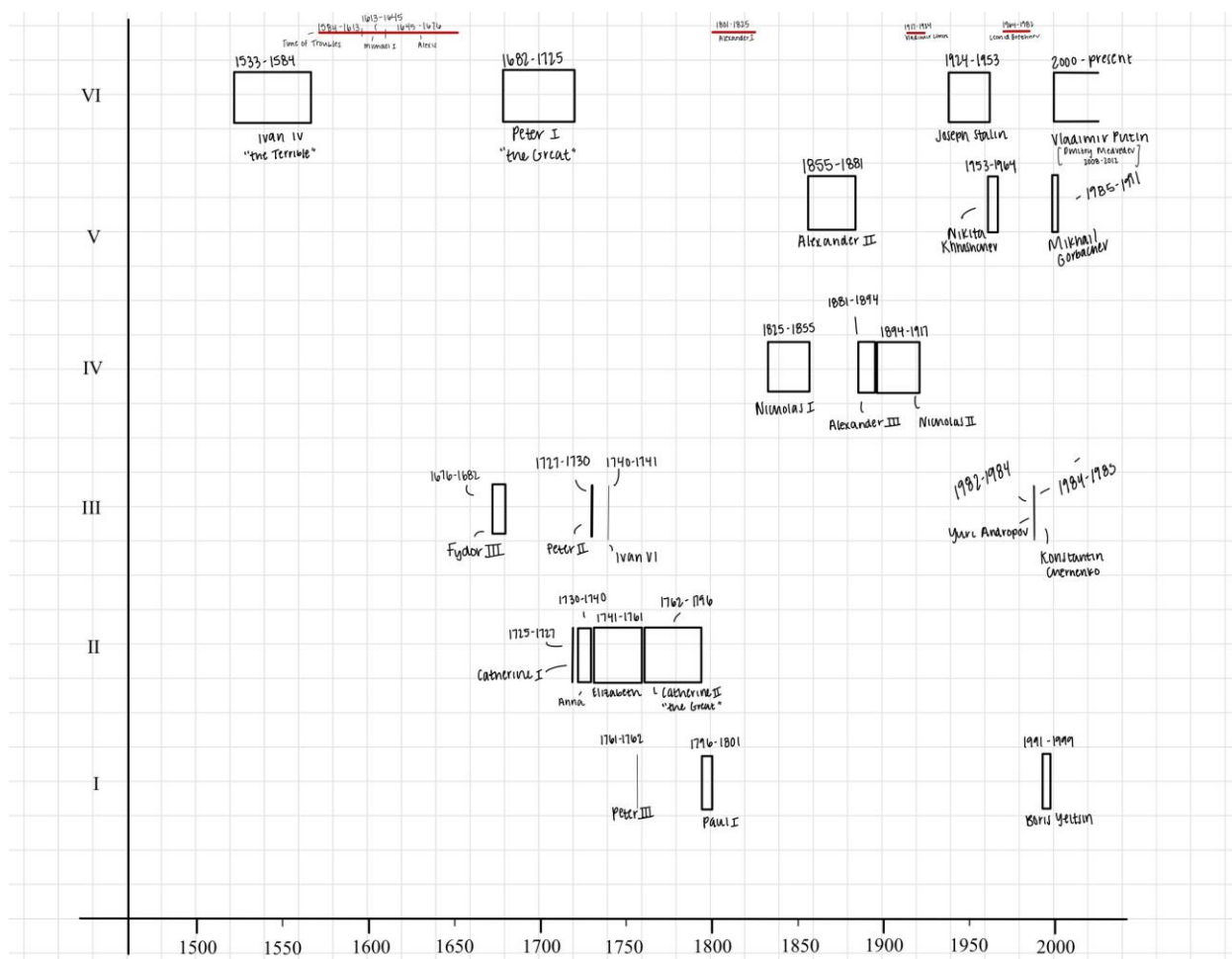


Figure 2.1

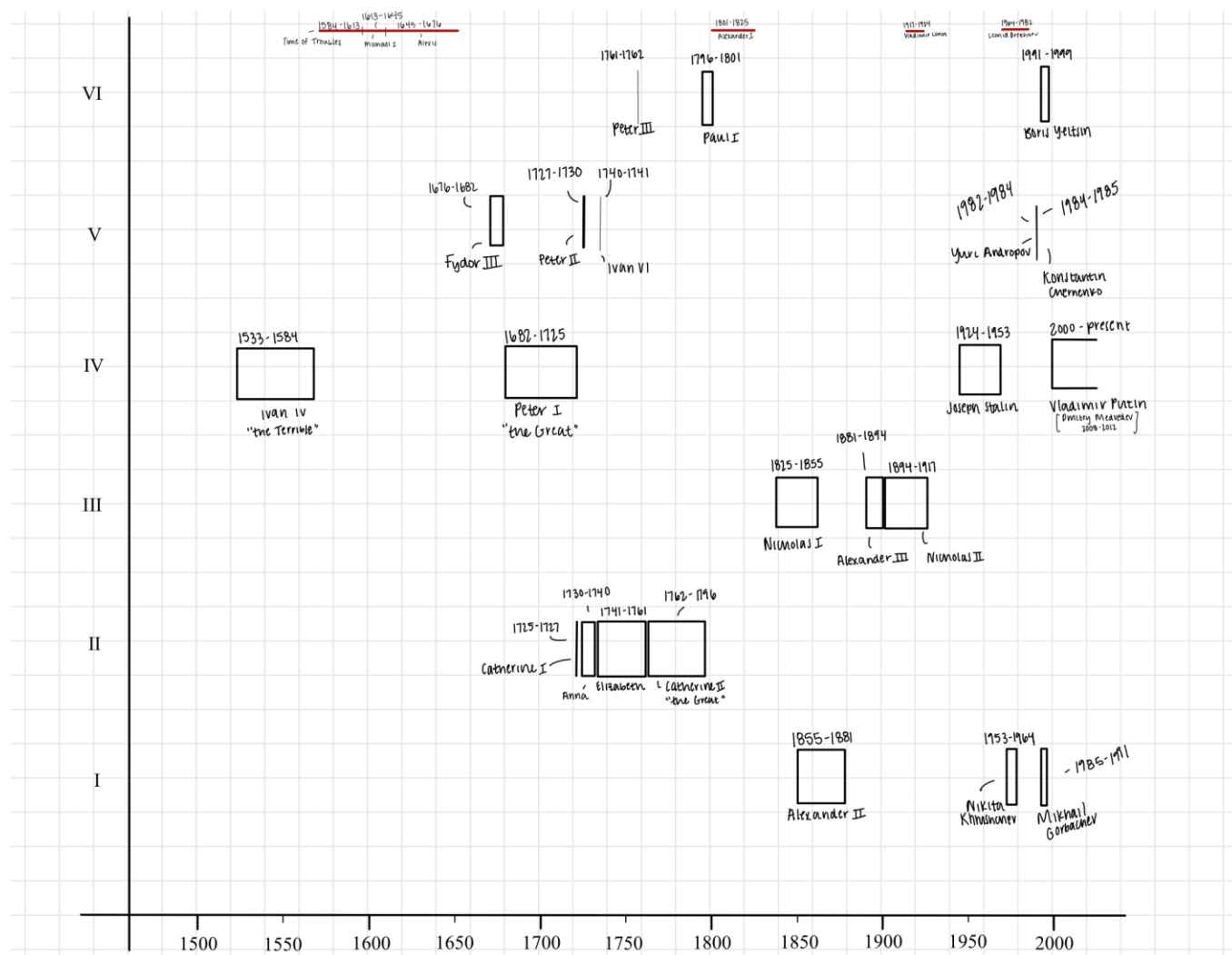
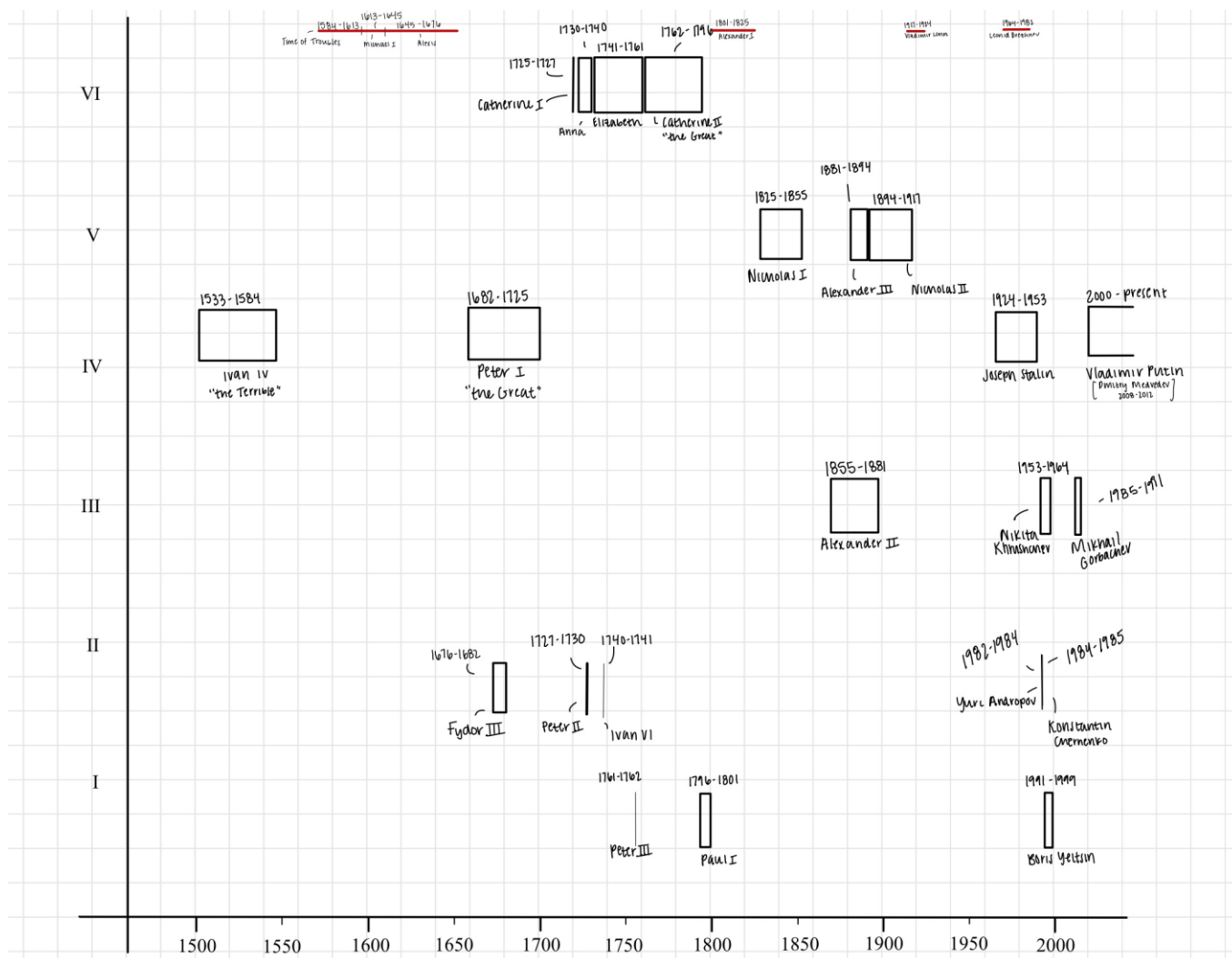


Figure 2.2



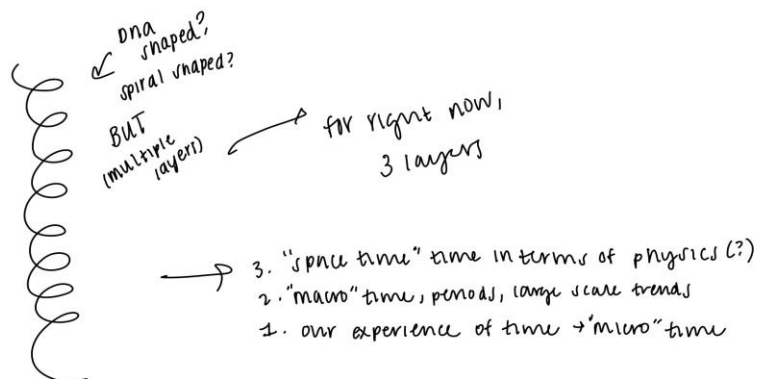




## Drafting Process

Originally, I wanted to explore what time looks like in terms of Russian history, but as my goals changed throughout my research, I wanted to explore a historical pattern instead of defining the his of time.

### Thesis Rough Draft (one)



pg. 174 - 175

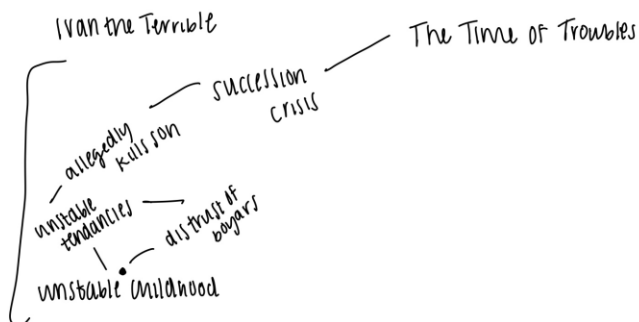
### Rough Draft Two

\* issues representing this (?)

### layers

3. "space time": time that we do not experience \*need to be more specific, redundant with 0.
2. "macro time": historical trends, periods, and eras
1. "micro time": (human time?) time we experience, events that support "macro time"
0. "physics time": no differentiation between past, present, & future - time that we do not experience \*

### Pre Petrine Era



# ROMANOV DYNASTY



Michael I



1613-1645

Michael I was unan.  
voted into Tsar of  
Russia ...

plano

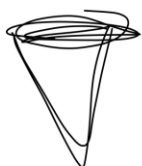
Lenin

Ivan the  
Terrible

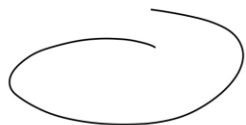
Peter the  
Great

Stalin

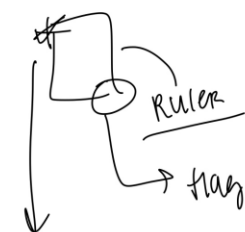
Putin



→ what happens  
after this?



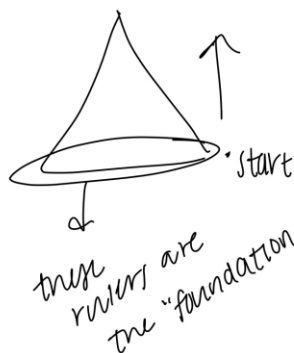
— map to  
show  
current territories



flag for country of  
origin

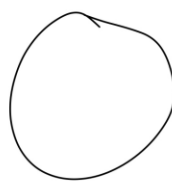
could  
be interactive,  
so you hover  
over the  
person and it  
shows  
more  
details

Read like ↑ ?



interactive can

start web page from  
bottom then go up?



→ globe

TIME IN  
TERMS OF ...  
SO LIKE SAY,  
THE ENLIGHTENMENT,  
COULD USE IT TO  
MAKE IT THIS  
"HISTORICAL"  
EUROPEAN EVENT  
WAS  
ACTUALLY  
IMPORTANT

1530

1672

TIER I: IVAN IV  
1530 - 1584

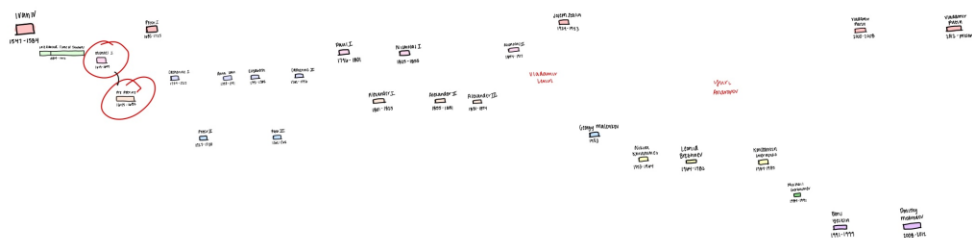
TIER X: PETER I  
1672 - 1725

TIER II: CATHARINE II  
1725 - 1761

TIER III: ANNA  
1730 - 1740

TIER V: PETER II  
1727 - 1730

TIER V: IVAN IV  
1740 - 1741



Key:

Tier I ☐

## Tier II ☐

Tier III 


Tier IV  $\square$

Tier V 

Tier VI ☐

Tier VII <sup>0</sup>

Tier VIII 

Tier VIII 

Ther X 

